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The Perceived Usefulness of a Summary of Performance by Postsecondary Disability Service Providers

Rebecca de Vries

THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE BY POSTSECONDARY DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

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By

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Presented by:

Rebecca S. de Vries
B.A. Psychology, La Roche College, 1996
M.Ed. Counseling, University of Pittsburgh, 1998
M.A. Psychology, Duquesne University, 1999

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THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE BY POSTSECONDARY DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

Approved by:

_____, Chair
Ara J. Schmitt, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor/Chair
Department of Counseling, Psychology & Special Education
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Jeffrey A. Miller, Ph.D., ABPP
Professor/Associate Dean
Graduate Studies and Research
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Elizabeth McCallum, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education
Duquesne University

ABSTRACT

THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE BY POSTSECONDARY DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Dissertation supervised by Ara J. Schmitt, Ph.D.

This study investigated postsecondary disability service providers' (DSP) perceived usefulness of an example of a well-developed SOP. This example SOP was included in a 22 question survey, administered electronically to DSPs who are members of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). The participants (n=298) were asked to rate the usefulness of the test scores, rationale for accommodation, history of use or success of accommodation, report writer's recommendations, and student input included in the example SOP for making accommodation decisions. ANOVAs were used to determine if the perceived usefulness of the parts of the Model SOP varied as a function of the DSPs' highest degree, disciplines or fields of study, training for the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or years of experience in postsecondary disability services. DSPs with less than five years of experience (*M*=1.85,

SD = .87) found the report writer's recommendations more useful than DSPs with greater than 10 years of experience (*M*=2.24, *SD* = 1.02). DSPs with 5-10 years of experience did not differ significantly from either of the other groups. Additionally, statistical significance was approached (p = .085) suggesting that DSPs with doctorate degrees compared to DSPs with a master's degree or a bachelor's degree may find the history of use or success less useful for accommodation decisions. Overall, the average usefulness ratings for all DSP groupings for the identified parts of the SOP were in the extremely useful or very useful range.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work…

to my husband, Peter, for his continued encouragement and support over the years

to my daughter, Shari

to my son, Devin

to my son, Trevor

Lastly, I dedicate my dissertation to all first-generation college students. I encourage you to have the tenacity to persevere even when you feel lost and alone in the world of academia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Estimates suggest that prior to 1975, 80% of children with a disability did not receive a public education. Among those children receiving some type of disability services, 3.5 million did not receive appropriate services (2002). In response to the lack of quality services, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was passed in 1975 (Etscheidt, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a; Planty, et al., 2008), mandating free appropriate public education (FAPE) for individuals with disabilities ages 3 to 21. The initial reauthorization of EACHA was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the most recent reauthorization is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, referred to as IDEIA or IDEA 2004 (Hyatt, 2007; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). This special education legislation mandates procedural safeguards which regulate special education for a child who has been identified as having at least one of the following disabilities: mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, and specific learning disabilities (IDEA 2004).

FAPE mandates that a child with a disability receive a special education, defined as "specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability." Specially designed instruction should be individualized to address the child's unique needs and for the child to meet regular education curriculum standards. The specially designed instruction might include adapting curriculum context, teaching methodologies, or delivery of instruction (IDEA 2004). A FAPE may also

require the provision of related services, such as transportation, rehabilitative counseling, physical and occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and audiology services, recreation, counseling, social-work services, psychological services, orientation and mobility services, health-related services, and assistive technology. The purpose for providing these support services is to increase the benefit a child receives from his or her education. FAPE also ensures that a child with a disability receives transition services, which are a coordinated set of activities that focus "on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities" (IDEA 2004, §300.43(a)(1)).

Transition Services and Special Education

Before receiving special education and related services, a child is identified as having a disability through a comprehensive evaluation (IDEA 2004). Once the child's eligibility for special education is determined, he or she must have an annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed by the IEP team. An IEP begins with basic information about the child's academic achievement and functional performance. This basic information drives the development of the student's measurable annual goals. The IEP specifies how the child's progress toward these annual goals will be measured and reported. The IEP states the services that will be offered to the child to help the child meet his or her postsecondary goals. The specified services are also intended to facilitate the child's participation in general education and extra-curricular activities with disabled and non-disabled peers. When a child's disability inhibits him or her from participating in classroom or other activities with peers, the IEP includes an explanatory statement. When applicable, the IEP includes a statement of the child's need for accommodations to

demonstrate his or her content knowledge on state or district-wide assessments, along with what the necessary accommodations are. An IEP that will be in effect when a child turns 16 years of age must include "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals" (IDEA 2004, §300.320(b)(1)(2)(c)).

IDEA 2004 shifted the focus of transition services from an outcome-oriented process (i.e., the transition of the student to post-school education or employment), to a results-oriented process that focuses on building the student's academic and functional achievement in preparation for the transition to post-school education or employment (Sitlington & Clark, 2007). IDEA 2004 mandated a new transition document for students with disabilities who are exiting high school due to graduation or who exceed the age eligibility for FAPE under state law; this document is referred to as a Summary of Performance (SOP):

> (3) For a child whose eligibility terminates under circumstances described in paragraph (e)(2) of this section, a public agency must provide the child with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals (§300.305(e)(3)).

SOPs are intended to help students with disabilities meet their goals in postsecondary environments such as education, work, or the community (National Joint Committee on

Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), 2007). The inclusion of SOPs among student's disability documentation will become increasingly more common (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b).

Summary of Performance

IDEA 2004 provides little guidance to states about the content or development of SOPs. This may account for the differences in the quality and content of SOPs, as State Education Agencies (SEA) are developing policies and guidelines (Sopko, 2008). A review of SEAs' SOP forms posted on the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Internet site (http://www.nsttac.org/content/transition-map) indicated that the Nationally Ratified Summary of Performance Model Template (SOP Template) was the best national representation of a SOP form (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a). The SOP Template (Appendix A) is the product of a collaborative effort of members of organizations such as the Learning Disability Association, the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education, and the Association of Higher Education and Disability (Dukes, Shaw, & Madaus, 2007; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007).

The SOP Template provides "a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals" (§300.305(e)(3)) as mandated in IDEA 2004. The SOP Template was developed to help transitioning students meet their postsecondary goals in a work, community, and/or educational environment (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b). The SOP Template instructions state that recommendations provided in the SOP "do not imply that an individual who qualified for special education in high school will automatically qualify for services in the postsecondary education or the employment setting. Postsecondary settings will continue to make eligibility decisions on a case-by-

case basis" (Krocker, 2005). The instructions suggest completing the SOP form as late in the student's senior year as possible in order to increase the currency of the information. There are directions for each of the "5 Parts" of the SOP Template which include: Background Information, Student's Postsecondary Goals, Summary of Performance (Academic, Cognitive, and Functional Areas), Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals, and Student input (Krocker, 2005). This study uses the Model Summary of Performance as a published example of a SOP based on the SOP Template form to illustrate a well-developed SOP.

Role of Disability Service Providers

Postsecondary educational institutions are required to have at least one person who determines reasonable accommodations for each student, based on the "functional impact" of the student's disability (Madaus, 2005). These professionals have various titles in different institutions, such as Director, Coordinator, or Disability Service Specialist (Harbour, 2008). For the purpose of this study, disability service provider (DSP) refers to a postsecondary professional who makes accommodation decisions for students with disabilities. Once a student is determined to be eligible for disability services in postsecondary education, he or she has the right to reasonable accommodations (Latham, 2006). A DSP reviews the student's disability documentation on a case-by-case basis and makes accommodation decisions (Wilhelm, 2003).

To date, there are no graduate programs that grant a degree in postsecondary disability services. However, there are a few counseling programs that provide students with an opportunity to receive a degree which emphasizes postsecondary disability services (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002). As a result, DSPs include

professionals with degrees in various disciplines or fields of study, with different kinds of training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and different level of degrees (Gormley, Hughes, Block, & Lendman, 2005; Harbour, 2008; Madaus, Banerjee, & McGuire, 2009; Whelley, Stodden, Harding, & Chang, 2001). This results in differences in the knowledge of DSPs and decreases the consistency of disability services provided to students (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002).

As part of a 2005 study, DSPs identified factors that influence their accommodation decisions for students with learning disabilities (Gormley et al., 2005). Slightly over half of the DSPs reported that their professional judgment influenced their accommodation decisions (Gormley et al., 2005), supporting the need to investigate the professional background of DSPs as a function of their perceived usefulness of influential factors for accommodation decisions. DSPs' most frequently identified influencing factor was the report writer's recommendation (75%). Other influencing factors included the rationale for the accommodation (38%), history of use or success of accommodation (36%), test scores (24%), and student input (19%). The influencing factors were reported in aggregate form and did not differentiate among DSPs with different professional backgrounds. For example, the study does not investigate if there is a difference for a given factor between DSPs whose field of study is education and DSPs whose field of study is arts and sciences.

Significance of the Problem

IDEA 2004 mandated that LEAs provide SOPs for students who are exiting secondary school with a regular diploma or who exceed the state's eligibility age for FAPE. The legislation provided minimal guidance for the development of these

transition documents. SEAs are developing guidelines and policies at different rates (Sopko, 2008). The literature to date has discussed how SOPs can be useful to the postsecondary receiving party, but there has been no investigation of the receiving postsecondary party's acceptance and use of the transition document.

The literature on SOPs thus far has focused on four primary areas. First, the literature explored the use of a well-developed SOP as an effective transition document to bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary education by providing a comprehensive account of the students' strengths and needs relative to postsecondary success (Kochhar-Bryant, 2007; Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006; Madaus et al., 2009; Madaus, Bigaj, Chafouleas, & Simonsen, 2006; NJCLD, 2006b; NJCLD, 2007; Shaw, Keenan, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2010; Shaw, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2009; Sitlington & Clark, 2007). Second, some literature focused on the SOPs' ability to meet the traditional standards for disability documentation used to verify that a student has a disability (AHEAD, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007; Madaus & Shaw, 2006b; NJCLD, 2007; Shaw, 2006). Third, in response IDEA 2004's lack of SOP guidelines, the literature discussed SOP guidelines and included an example of a well-developed SOP. The guidelines include considerations for the development timeline of SOPs, and designating which secondary disability professional should be responsible developing SOPs (Dukes et al., 2007; Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007; Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006; Lamb, 2007; Leconte, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006b; Martin, Dycke, D'Ottavio, & Nickerson, 2007). Fourth, SOPs are discussed in the literature as an avenue for the facilitation of the students' development of self-determination skills (e.g., Carter, Lane, Pierson, & Glaeser, 2006; Trainor, 2007).

Criticisms and concerns about SOPs discussed in the literature include their limitations to meet the traditional criteria in postsecondary education for the determining if a student qualifies as a student with a disability. Some of the literature questioned the need for SOPs, suggesting that much of the information is repetitive and is available in other provided disability documentation. Also questioned is the cost-effectiveness of preparing a well-developed SOP (Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). In contrast, there are publications that supported the potential of SOPs as a comprehensive, understandable, and useful document, summarizing both the formal and the informal assessment data of students with LDs transitioning to postsecondary education (Dukes et al., 2007; Madaus et al., 2006).

Implications of Current Study

No one has investigated if the factors DSPs reported as influencing their accommodation decisions (test scores, rationale for accommodation, history of use or success, report writer's recommendations, and student input) vary as a function of the diverse backgrounds of DSPs (discipline or field of study, highest degree completed, discipline or field of study, training in interpreting disability documentation, and years of experience in postsecondary disability services). This study uses the construct "perceived usefulness" to investigate DSPs' acceptance and use of SOPs. Perceived usefulness has been found to be a better indicator of acceptance and use than ease of use (Lin & Chou, 2009).

The results of this study can inform revisions of SOP legislation and policy as educators seek to increase the value of SOPs. The utilization of this study's findings can guide the development and adaptation of SOP forms. Future forms might reduce or

eliminate extraneous information, which DSPs perceive as not useful, and/or focus more on providing comprehensive information on the influencing factors for accommodation decisions. The use of this study's results may help prioritize the allocation of secondary resources and increase the usefulness of SOPs for postsecondary DSPs. The investigation of how the perceived usefulness of an influencing factor varies as a function of the DSPs background has the potential to steer postsecondary educational institutions as they make continuing education decisions. The study's results may help administrators be more specific in meeting individual DSPs' needs, rather than taking a global approach. This would increase the overall quality of services provided to students and minimize the time and financial commitment. In addition, some administrators may be able to extrapolate priorities from the findings of this study, which they can implement when rating the qualifications of potential job applicants based upon their demographic background.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study investigated DSPs' perceived usefulness of a Model SOP in accommodation decisions in a postsecondary educational environment. Disability service providers rated their perceived usefulness of the Model SOP (i.e., test scores, rationale for accommodation, history of use or success of accommodation, report writer's recommendations, and student input for accommodation). The DSP's usefulness ratings were analyzed by taking into account the difference among the DSPs' highest degree completed, disciplines or fields of study, training for the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or years of experience in postsecondary disability services. This study investigated five research questions.

1. How do the usefulness ratings for the test scores section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 1: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 2: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 3: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 4: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

2. How do the usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 5: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 6: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 7: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 8: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

3. How do the usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 9: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 10: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 11: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 12: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

4. How do the usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 13: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 14: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 15: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 16: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

5. How do the usefulness ratings for the student input section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 17: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 18: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 19: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 20: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among high school graduates in 2003, there were 129,984 students diagnosed with learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Many of these graduates pursued a postsecondary education (Henderson, 2001). Since 1983, the number of postsecondary students who reported a learning disability (LD) increased from 0.5% in 1983 to 2.8% in 2004 (Higher Education Research Institute, 2007). New in IDEA 2004 is the requirement that schools provide graduates with a summary of academic achievement and functional performance and recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals, a transition document, referred to as a Summary of Performance (SOP). This study investigated the relationship between postsecondary disability service providers' (DSP) characteristics and the DSPs' usefulness ratings for the sections of a Model SOP when making accommodation decisions. The SOP Usefulness Survey (Appendix B) that was developed for this study asks DSPs questions about their discipline or field of study, highest degree completed, training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and years of experience in postsecondary disability services. In addition, the SOP Usefulness Survey provides the Model SOP as an example, and asks DSPs to rate the usefulness of the following sections: test scores, rationale of accommodations, history of use or success of accommodation, report writer's recommendations, and student input. The usefulness ratings are for factors that DSP's identified in a previous study as influential in accommodation decisions for students with LD (Gormley et al., 2005)

Postsecondary Students with Learning Disabilities

In order to receive disability services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and American Disability Act Amendment Act of 2008 (ADAAA), students at postsecondary educational institutions must self-identify as a student with a disability and provide documentation that meets that school's requirements (Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). While students with LDs are less likely to go to college than their non-disabled peers (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, & Edgar, 2000), the percentage of full-time college freshmen reporting an LD has increased from 1% in 1988 to almost 2.5% in 2000 (Henderson, 2001), representing the largest reported disability group (41.8%) at colleges (Ward, 2007). Areas of academic difficulties for students with LDs in postsecondary school include: (a) oral language, (b) reading, (c) written language, (d) mathematics, and (e) study skills. Oral language difficulties could interfere with the student's ability to learn and use new terminology appropriately, pronounce multisyllabic words, or follow a long speech or lecture. Reading skill difficulties (e.g., vocabulary weaknesses, difficulty remembering details, understanding main ideas, figurative meanings, and comprehending inferences, retention, inability to vary reading rate, ignoring punctuation) can impede academic success. A student with written language difficulties may have poor penmanship, bad sentence structure, frequent spelling errors, or difficulty organizing and developing ideas for written assignments. Mathematical problematic areas for students often include an incomplete mastery of basic math facts, difficulty recalling sequential mathematical operations and steps, and/or transposing numbers, as well as difficulty with computation and reasoning. Students lacking study skills might experience difficulty organizing their time or workspace, preparing for tests, memorizing and practicing recall, and/or they may have poor test taking strategies. Students who have trouble in these

areas are often unprepared for the academic rigors of postsecondary school and are likely to struggle to be successful in college (Vogel & Reder, 1998).

Incoming freshmen with LDs often do not anticipate the differences in the level of support available or the academic performance necessary for success in college compared to high school. The transition often requires students to adjust from having six hours of class a day with 25-30 students in a room, to only attending 12 hours of class per week with perhaps 300 students in each session. Students with LDs often are not prepared to integrate information from nonstop classroom lectures or to learn information independently in the textbook and through library research. Adjusting to less frequent exams on larger amounts of material in college can present another challenge for these students. Compared to high school teachers, college instructors are less likely to monitor a student's attendance and progress. Time management can be difficult for students with LDs as college has more unstructured time and requires students to work independently (Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003). The change in the level of professional support can also make adjusting to the differences between secondary and postsecondary challenging for students, often leading to feelings of frustration and failure (Foley, 2006).

Language-based learning disabilities. Language-based LDs include reading disorders and written expression disorders (Lindstrom, 2007). Central to a student's ability to learn are the "proficiency and competency" of his or her reading and written language skills (Feifer & De Fina, 2002). Research estimates indicate that approximately 9% of the population has a reading disability (Pennington, 2009). The terms "dyslexia" and "reading disabilities" (RD) are often used synonymously and account for 80% of the LD diagnoses (Hudson, High, & Otaiba, 2007). Students with dyslexia often have

difficulties with reading tasks such as coding and decoding words, fluency, reading rate, reading with expression, or reading comprehension (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; Hudson et al., 2007; Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008). There is no universal classification of written expressive disabilities, or agraphias (Acree & Johnson, 2003), but written expressive deficits are not due to the inability to read (Roeltgen, 2003). Students with agraphias may experience difficulty with handwriting, spelling and composition (Fletcher et al., 2007). Prevalence estimates for agraphias vary greatly ranging from 5-20% of the population (Phillips & Clark, 2003).

There are three general types of academic accommodations used by students with reading and writing disabilities (language-based LDs): test accommodations, access accommodations, and program accommodations (Lindstrom, 2007). Test accommodations often include providing the student with a quiet/private testing room with few distractions, extended time (1.5, double, or untimed), and/or scheduled break times that do not count as testing time. Other test accommodations include speech-to-text technology for tests requiring a written response, the use of a word processor, or the option to have a proofreader. Some students' test accommodations include a test reader, the availability of an interpreter to clarify directions and linguistically complex questions, and access to a scribe who records the student's oral responses on paper (Lindstrom, 2007).

Access accommodations are special allowances for in-class assignments that require reading and/or writing. Note-taking assistance can include receiving notes from the instructor or a classmate, tape recording lectures, and/or transcribing notes. Some textbooks or required readings for class assignments may be available in alternate formats

such as e-text, audio tape, CD, or screen reader. Program accommodations are determined to be appropriate for some students with language-based LDs and might include a course load reduction, recommendations to appeal for course substitution, and/or priority registration (Lindstrom, 2007).

Following a literature review of the effectiveness of extended time for students with reading disabilities, Lindstrom (2007) suggested that "one may argue that extended time is a necessary but not sufficient condition to enable adults with RD to perform at grade level, depending on the severity of their deficits." The literature lacks research on the efficacy of other accommodations for RD for adults. Similarly, empirical support for the use of the interventions commonly approved for writing disorders for adults is not available (Lindstrom, 2007).

Postsecondary Disability Documents

The primary purpose of students' disability documentation in postsecondary education is to verify the existence of the students' disability (Gil, 2007; Gormley et al., 2005; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a; U.S. Department of Education, 2007c). There is no standard used by all postsecondary schools to verify the existence of a student's learning disability (Gormley et al., 2005; McGuire, Madaus, Litt, & Ramirez, 1996). The disability documentation for a secondary student with an LD who is transitioning into postsecondary education may meet the requirement at one postsecondary school but not at another (Gormley et al., 2005). For example, some postsecondary schools require the currency of the documents verifying students' disability to be within 3 years (45%), others within 5 years (3%), and some schools do not specify a number of years but require the documentation to be recent (17%). Postsecondary schools often have specific

qualifications for the examiner who evaluated the student, such as qualified (68%), adult experience (39%), license/certification (48%), or other (12%). The majority of respondents indicated that the documentation must include aptitude, achievement, and processing diagnostic areas (62%), with a smaller number of colleges requiring only aptitude and achievement (22%) data. Some postsecondary schools require or suggest specific tests for aptitude, achievement, and information processing and/or identify specific tests as unacceptable. There are inconsistencies among the types of scores required to be included in the disability documentation among postsecondary schools. At one end of the spectrum, there are postsecondary schools that require the reporting of students' standard, percentile, and grade equivalent scores in disability documentation (11%), while at the other end of the spectrum, there are schools that do not specify the inclusion of any type of score (29%). In the middle are postsecondary schools that require some combination of standard, percentile or grade equivalent scores (Gormley et al., 2005). Regardless of any other requirements in postsecondary education, students with a disability are legally required to self-identify and provide documentation for review according to the institutions' requirements (Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006; Latham, 2006).

Legislation

There is no standard definition for LDs in postsecondary education. However, disability services are determined by Section 504 and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), recently amended as the ADAAA. These laws guarantee students who are otherwise qualified to equal access to a postsecondary education (Shaw et al., 2010). Both Section 504 and ADA are anti-discrimination laws, in contrast to IDEA, which is an

education law designed to provide "an individualized education to each student with a disability" (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005, p. 8).

Section 504. Section 504 is federal regulation that applies in both K-12 education institutions and postsecondary education institutions that receive federal financial assistance (Mull, Sitlington, & Alper, 2001). The law applies to students whose disability "substantially limits one or more major life function" and "is concerned with prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability" (Madaus & Shaw, 2004). Section 504 specifies that the student be "otherwise qualified," meeting the essential eligibility program requirements (Thomas, 2000). Subpart D of Section 504, which applies to K-12 education, mandates FAPE and the requirements for the evaluation, placement, procedural safeguards, and nonacademic services for student disability services (Madaus & Shaw, 2004). Subpart E of Section 504 pertains specifically to postsecondary education, ensuring that discriminatory academic requirements and evaluation methods be modified, as well as prohibiting rules that impede the participation of students with disabilities in classrooms (e.g. prohibiting tape recording class). While these anti-discriminatory safeguards are in place, postsecondary institutions are not required to adapt academic programs' course of instruction in a manner that would compromise the educational requirements necessary for licensing (Mull et al., 2001).

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act. With the passage of ADA in 1990, antidiscrimination laws expanded to include "all aspects of mainstream U.S. culture," encompassing postsecondary education, whether or not the institution received federal financial assistance (Hernandez, Keys, & Balcazar, 2003). To have legal rights under ADA, a disability must substantially limit a major life activity (Thomas, 2000;

Latham, 2006). Learning, under ADA, is considered a major life activity (Wilhelm, 2003). With the passage of the Americans with Disability Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) in 2008, the list of major life activities broadened in scope. For example, ADAAA expands the list of major life activities to include reading, concentrating, thinking and communicating (§3(a)(2)(A)). Another change is that the "ameliorative effects of mitigating measures such as medication, ...; use of assistive technology; reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids or services; or learned behaviors or adaptive neurological modifications" are not considered when determining if "an impairment substantially limits a major life activity," although "ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses" are not considered (ADAAA, §3(4)(E)(i)(ii)). While the term "substantial impairment" is not changed in the Amendments, the stated rejection of requirements "enunciated" by previous Supreme Court decisions support the overall objective of the Amendments to reinstate the "broad scope of protection" that was intended under ADA (§2(b)). The substantial impairment is "often referred to as functional impairment" (Ofiesh, Hughes, & Scott, 2004, p. 58) of a student's disability. Under ADAAA, the determination of the functional impact of the students' disabilities on their "capacity to perform academic related tasks" does not consider mitigating factors. As DSPs continue to use students' disability documentation for eligibility determination they must now do so in adherence with the new mandates of ADAAA (Shaw et al., 2010).

The differences of the laws which apply in K-12 educational institutions and postsecondary educational institutions have resulted in matriculating students who qualified as a student with a learning with a disability in high school but not qualifying in postsecondary school (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b). However under ADAAA, "Eligibility

for protection under ADAAA will be weighed more by the appropriateness of reasonableness of requested accommodation, rather than disability status," which means that students who received disability services in high school will most likely qualify for disability services in postsecondary educational environments (Shaw et al., 2010, p. 145). The new ADAAA standards may go against the postsecondary schools' current documentation standards, which do not consider relevant prior disability evaluation data or which are informative for the functional impact of the disability (Shaw et al., 2010).

ADAAA has expanded the meaning of "major life activity" and "ameliorating factors" for determining if a disability exists, both of which will likely result in more students qualifying for services. ADAAA maintains the importance of a disability diagnosis and the focus on the functional impact of the disability, both for eligibility and accommodation decisions. Therefore, the relevance of non-traditional criteria that previously was not considered part of eligibility and accommodation decisions may increase.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004. In 1990, the title of EAHCA was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). This entitlement legislation "assures all students with disabilities a free appropriate public education consisting of individualized programming in the least restrictive environment" (Gregg, Scott, McPeek, & Ferri, 1999). The LEAs of matriculating freshmen are not responsible for providing students with disability eligibility documentation for other agencies such as colleges (Gormley et al., 2005). However, the documentation provided to the student by the LEA is typically the documentation that the student provides to postsecondary institutions.

With the revisions of IDEA 2004, there is an increased likelihood that the disability documentation of students with LDs will not meet traditional postsecondary eligibility criteria (Holdnack & Weiss, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007; Madaus & Shaw, 2006b; Shaw, 2006). IDEA 1997 removed the requirement to complete triennial reevaluations for students. IDEA 2004 revisions further reduced the mandate for complete reevaluations by removing the requirement for exit reevaluations. IDEA 2004 requires that additional data or assessments only be obtained when necessary "to determine the child's educational needs" or "to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability," when initiated by an IEP team member, a qualified professional, or a parent (IDEA, §300.305(d)(1)). Traditionally, IDEA limited the diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities to the discrepancy model, which compares the child's intellectual functioning with his or her academic achievement. According to IDEA 2004, states may not require the use of the discrepancy model when determining if a student has an LD and must permit the use of a model based on the student's response to scientific, research-based interventions. The most common scientific, research-based interventions are various forms of the Response to Treatment Intervention (RTI) model. With the RTI model, a student receives instruction based on a scientific research-based intervention, and after a set period, his or her progress is measured. A review of the student's progress may support continuing the intervention, introducing a different intervention, or in some RTI models, referring the student for traditional norm-referenced tests (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). All of these changes potentially decrease the likelihood that the documentation of a student with an LD transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education is going

to meet postsecondary traditional eligibility requirements, but this issue is outside the scope of this study.

IDEA 2004 mandates that the child's IEP beginning no later than age 16 include "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment," and "where appropriate, independent living skills" and "the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals" (§300.320(b)). In the previous version of IDEA, the transition planning for students with disabilities focus was an outcome oriented process (Johnson, 2005). IDEA 2004, however, shifts the emphasis of transition services to the actual transition of the student to post-school education or employment, to a results-oriented process. The results-oriented process focuses on building the student's academic and functional achievement in preparation for the transition to post-school education or employment (Sitlington & Clark, Johnson, 2005; 2007).

> Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that – (1) is designed to be within a results—oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (2) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interest; and include – (i) instruction; (ii) related services; (iii) community experiences; (iv) the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and (v)

> if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation; (b) transition services for children with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related services, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education (IDEA 2004, §300.43)

Part of providing transition services to student now includes generating a SOP. This is an individualized transition document for the purpose of facilitating the student's success in the student's intended postsecondary environments (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). Local Education Agencies (LEA) are mandated by IDEA 2004 to provide students who are receiving special education and exiting secondary school because of graduation or exceeding the age of eligibility for services "with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals" (§300.305(e)(3)).

Summary of performance. The SOP addresses the transition needs of students as a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education (Shaw, 2005), by providing relevant documentation and information to facilitate a smooth transition for the student from secondary to postsecondary environments (Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). IDEA 2004 specifies that LEAs provide exiting students (because of graduation or exceeding the age of eligibility for services) who are receiving special education a SOP that includes: a summary of academic achievement, a summary of functional performance, and recommendations for helping the student meets his or her post school goals (§300.305(e)(3)). The law does not provide any other specific guidelines for this transition document (Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006; Madaus & Shaw,

2006a, 2006b; Shaw, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2009). This increases the likelihood that some states will choose to include “extensive information” and other states to include “minimal information” (Cortiella, 2007, p. 97), as State Education Agencies (SEA) respond to the new mandate. A survey of state directors of special education (n=40) indicated that the majority of the states have a SOP policy (62.5%), others are currently developing a policy (1%) and over a quarter of states (27.5%) do not have a "policy specific to the use and implementation of the SOP" (Sopko, 2008, p. 2).

Nationally ratified summary of performance model template. The Nationally Ratified Summary of Performance Model Template (SOP Template) was developed by the National Transition Assessment Summit (NTAS) over a two year period and represents the collaborative effort by secondary and postsecondary representatives, rehabilitation specialists, consumer advocates and parents in consultation with "the Council on Education Diagnostic Services (CEDS), the Learning Disability Association (LDA), the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE), the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), as well as several CEC divisions, including the Division on Learning Disabilities (DLD) and the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT)" (Kochhar-Bryant, 2007, p. 72). The participants’ intent was to develop a document that would help students transition from the disability legislation of IDEA to the postsecondary anti-discrimination legislation of Section 504 and ADA (Dukes et al., 2007; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007). The outcome of this effort, the SOP Template, is used by many LEAs either verbatim or with adaptations.

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) disseminates information that promotes the success of secondary students with disabilities meeting their postsecondary goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a). Thirty-three SEAs post SOP forms on the NSTTAC Internet Site (http://www.nsttac.org/content/transition-map). Ten of the states' example form is the SOP Template (AK, AZ, AR, CT, GA, NM, NC, OH, SC, TX) and parts and/or verbiage of the SOP Template are included in the forms of 16 other states (AL, DE, IL, IN, ME, MO, NY, ND, OR, PA, SD, TN, WA, WV, WI, WY). The review of the SOP forms posted on the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center's (NSTTAC) Internet site supports this study's use of the SOP Template as the best national representation of SOP forms provided by SEAs.

The SOP Template is designed to adhere to the IDEA 2004 mandate that students who are exiting secondary school with a regular diploma or "due to exceeding the age of eligibility" be provided with a report of their "academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals" §300.305(e)(3). The SOP Template includes 5 Parts: Background Information, Student's Postsecondary Goals, Summary of Performance, Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals, and Student Input (Krocker, 2005).

Part 1, Background Information, includes demographic information and a checklist to identify supplemental assessment documents provided with the SOP. Part 2, Student's Postsecondary Goals, provides the student's postsecondary goals as stated in his or her IEP. Part 3, Summary of Performance, includes three areas: academic (reading,

math, written language, and learning skills), cognitive, and functional. Each of the sections of Part 3 includes space to indicate the student's present level of performance, such as grade level, standard scores, strengths and needs, as well as space to report the essential accommodations utilized in high school and the rationale for accommodations for their use. Specifically relevant to this study is Part 3, which includes the student's test scores, the rationale for the accommodations, and the history of use or success of the accommodations; each of these were previously identified by DSPs as common factors that influence their accommodation decisions for students with LDs (Gormley et al., 2005). Part 4, Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals, is designated for recommendations that are relevant to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals in higher education or career-technical education, employment, independent living, or community participation. The report writer's recommendations is another factor that DSPs reported as influencing their accommodation decisions for student's with LDs (Gormley et al., 2005). Part 5, Student Input, is the student's response to five questions obtained either through an interview or independently. It is relevant to this study because DSPs identified student input as an influencing factor in their accommodation decision for students with LDs (Gormley et al., 2005).

Model summary of performance. The usefulness of a SOP for accommodation decisions depends on the quality of the SOP. This study uses the Model Summary of Performance (Model SOP) as an example of a well-developed SOP for the following reasons. First, the Model SOP is based on the SOP Template, which adheres to the IDEA 2004 requirements. Second, the SOP Template is the form posted in whole or part by 26 states on the NSTTAC Internet Site. Third, the Model SOP was first published in

"Assessment for Effective Intervention" by three seminal researchers on the topic of SOPs (Dukes et al., 2007). And fourth the Model SOP is for a student with a language-based LD (reading and written expression disorders). Language-based learning disabilities is an appropriate diagnosis for a student with dyslexia who also has difficulty with spoken or written language (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), 2010), and accounts for 80% of the LD diagnoses (Hudson et al., 2007). Therefore, the Model SOP is an example of a SOP document for the most common type of disability among college students, increasing the generalizability of this study.

Postsecondary Disability Services

"Postsecondary disability services" is a broad term that refers to "those generic activities that are carried out to ensure equal educational opportunity for any student with a disability" (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002, p. 272). Postsecondary schools are legally mandated to provide disability services under ADAAA and Section 504. But unlike K-12 schools, which are governed by IDEA 2004, postsecondary schools are not mandated to collect data or to report on disability service delivery (Harbour, 2008). Services are typically provided through offices with names such as *Disability Services, Office for Students with Disabilities, Disability Resource Center,* or *Access Center,* and are offered at private, public, two year, and four year institutions (Harbour, 2008).

Postsecondary disability service providers. Common titles among postsecondary disability services providers include Director, Coordinator, Disability Service Specialist, or ADA Coordinator (Harbour, 2008; Madaus et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study, DSP refers to the professionals who work directly with students who have disabilities at postsecondary institutions. As a profession, the field of DSPs is

relatively new, and there are no legal guidelines requiring that the DSPs have training in special education or disabilities (Madaus, 2005). In the 1970s, the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) originated as a professional organization for DSPs with a little over 30 members (Dukes & Shaw, 1999). In the last three decades, the membership has increased to over 2,400 members (Stephan Hamlin-Smith, Executive Director AHEAD, personal communication, July 5, 2010). AHEAD has been instrumental over the years in advancing DSPs as professionals with the development of a Code of Ethics, Professional Standards, and Program Standards (AHEAD, n.d.). Many DSPs reportedly find themselves unprepared to address student needs (Norlander, Shaw, & McGuire, 1990). This often results in DSPs learning on the job (Whelley, 2002), providing services based on the education and training they have received (Dukes & Shaw, 2004). In a void of any formal training, a DSP with an educational background in rehabilitation would be more likely to focus on physical accommodations, in contrast to a DSP with a counselor background who is likely to promote counseling supports (Dukes & Shaw, 2004).

In recent years, professional training alternatives are being developed for DSPs to promote the delivery of consistent equal disability services to students with disabilities. There are a few graduate programs which offer coursework specific to postsecondary disability services, and one graduate program offers postsecondary disability services advanced training. One option for increasing the knowledge of DSPs that is already working in the field is peer-teaching that occurs on a regularly scheduled basis (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002). A peer-teaching approach might provide an opportunity for DSPs to learn instructional methodology from a special education teacher, test

interpretation from a school psychologist, or how to teach self-advocacy skills from a counselor (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002).

DSPs' academic backgrounds include a variety of disciplines or fields of study. A 2001 nationwide survey found that the majority of DSPs reported their discipline or field of study as either counseling/psychology (35.7%) or education (28.9%). Other respondents reported that their discipline or field of study was disability services (15.8%) and vocational/adult (5.4%). The remainder of respondents (14.2%) reported arts and science as their field of study (Whelley et al., 2001). Comparing these findings (Whelley et al., 2001) with a more recent survey (Dukes & Shaw, 2004), the percentage of respondents reporting arts and sciences may be increasing. The 2004 survey's "Other" category (23%) represented training in fields such as law, music, and reading (Dukes & Shaw). Other fields or disciplines of study reported in the 2004 survey were special education (19.2%), counseling (18.2%), rehabilitation counseling (11.3%), higher education (11.2%), elementary/secondary education (9.7%), and psychology (7.1%). The majority of DSPs obtained their training in interpreting disability documentation at conferences (65%), while some had no training (9%). A little over a quarter (27%) of the members were trained to read disability documentation in an academic program (Madaus et al., 2009). In a recent survey (Madaus et al., 2009) more than a quarter of the respondents (28%) reported having 5 to 10 years experience in postsecondary disability services, and even more respondents (59%) reported that they have more than 10 years of experience. These same AHEAD members reported their education level as follows: doctorate (18%), masters (73%), bachelors (7%), and other (2%).

Determining appropriate academic accommodations. Disability Service Providers determine what constitutes reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis (Wilhelm, 2003), using the student's disability documentation (Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Lindstrom, 2007; Mull et al., 2001). How the disability impairment (functional impact) affects learning is considered and the student's disability documentation is evaluated to establish if there is objective data that attests that the impairment is substantially limiting (Shaw et al., 2010). The identification of the functional impact of a student's learning disability is part of the decision-making process for the determination of appropriate academic accommodations for the student (Lindstrom, 2007; Ofiesh, 2007; Ofiesh et al., 2004). Accommodations decisions are based upon the functional impact of the student's disability in different college environments, such as classrooms, learning experiences, and examinations (Lindstrom, 2007).

The NJCLD, held a National Transition Summit, from which a recent survey was requested on the disconnect between the exiting disability documentation for secondary students with LDs and the eligibility requirements for postsecondary education In this survey DSPs were asked to identify accommodation provision influencing factors (Gormley et al., 2005). More than half of the DSPs (53%) identified the professional judgment of disability services offices as an influencing factor. Most common factors influencing accommodation provision for students with LDs were the report writer's recommendations (75%) and the reasonableness of the accommodation (67%). Influencing factors also included the rationale for accommodation (38%), the history of

use or success of accommodation (36%), test scores (24%), and student input (19%) when DSPs determined accommodation provisions (Gormley et al., 2005).

Discussion of Current Study

SOPs are new documents mandated by IDEA 2004 to facilitate a smooth transition for students from secondary to postsecondary environments which include school, employment and community environments (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). A literature review of extant literature found no studies that investigated the acceptance and use of SOPs by the intended recipients of the transition document (e.g., AHEAD, 2005; Carter et al., 2006; Dukes et al., 2007; Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006; Lamb, 2007; Leconte, 2006; Madaus et al., 2009; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a, 2006b; Martin et al., 2007; NJCLD, 2007; Shaw, 2006; Shaw et al., 2010; Shaw, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2009; Sitlington & Clark, 2007; Trainor, 2007). This study examines the "perceived usefulness" of an example SOP instead of ease of use because "perceived usefulness" is reportedly a better indicator of acceptance and use than ease of use (Lin & Chou, 2009).

In order to investigate the acceptance and use of SOPs by the intended recipients, this study ask DSPs to rate influential factors (i.e. test scores, rationale for accommodation, history of use or success of accommodation, report writer's recommendations, and student input for accommodation) included in the Model SOP. The Model SOP was written for a hypothetical student with a language-based LD who is transitioning to postsecondary education. The study also explores how the perceived usefulness of the influential factors in the Model SOP by the DSPs function as a factor of the DSP's discipline or field of study, highest degree completed, training on the

interpretation of disability documentation, and/or years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

The SOP Usefulness Survey includes the Model SOP because it is an example of a well-developed SOP authored by three researchers (Dukes et al., 2007) who have published numerous articles on SOPs. The Model SOP is based on the SOP Template which represents a collaborative effort of members of national organizations invested in the education of students with LDs (NJCLD, 2007) and is the best national representative example of a SEA's form (U.S. Department of Education, 2007b). Additionally, the Model SOP exemplifies a SOP for a student with a language-based LD who is transitioning to postsecondary education. As RDs account for 80% of the LD diagnoses and are a category of language-based LD (Hudson et al., 2007), the generalizability of this study is increased.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate if DSPs' perceived usefulness of a well-developed SOP differs as a function of the DSPs' discipline or field of study, highest degree earned, training for the interpretation of disability documentation, or years of experience in postsecondary disability services. The measurement of the perceived usefulness is the DSPs' ratings on information provided in the example SOP. In an earlier study, DSPs identified "influential factors" for the accommodation decisions of students with LDs (Gormley et al., 2005). DSPs were asked to rate the perceived usefulness of the following factors for this survey: test scores rational for accommodation, history and use of accommodation, report writer's recommendation and student input were measured in this study. This is a quasi-experimental study designed to answer five research questions, investigating if DSPs' perceived usefulness ratings on "influential factors" in the Model SOP vary as a function of the previously stated characteristics of the DSPs.

Participants

The participants in this study were members of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). Members of AHEAD are active in policy development and are invested in the delivery of quality services to persons with disabilities in all areas of higher education. AHEAD has approximately 2,500 members (S. Hamlin Smith, AHEAD Executive Director, email communication, July 5, 2010). The reported gender of members is as follows: female (81.3%), male (18.5%), otherwise

identified (.3%). Members' reported race and/or ethnicity was predominately White or Caucasian (84.95%), compared to African-American or Black (6.76%), and those who identified themselves as Other (8.29%). Among members, the highest degrees reported were as follows: doctorate (9.63%), master's (68.60%), bachelors (12.58%), associates (2.84%), and other (6.35%). Participants were recruited through AHEAD's general membership listserv and were limited to members of AHEAD who work directly with students with disabilities in the United States.

Measure

The SOP Usefulness Survey instrument was developed to measure DSPs' usefulness rating on "influential factors" for accommodation decisions. The instrument is composed of 22 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. "Section 1" of the survey includes 10 demographic questions about the participants and the institutions at which they work. In "Section 2" participants are asked to review the Model SOP, a published example of a well developed SOP for a student with a language disability (Dukes et al., 2007), and to refer to it when answering the questions. Prior permission was obtained from Lyman L. Dukes to use the Model SOP in this study and to made appropriate adaptations as needed. The published Model SOP was adapted for the SOP Usefulness Survey in order to reflect performance on the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – IV* (WISC-IV) (Wechsler, 2003). Participants were to rate the "influential factors" for accommodation decisions (test scores, rationale for accommodations, history or use of accommodation, writer's recommendations and student input) as presented in the Model SOP. Seven questions asked the participants to rate the usefulness of each of the five dependent variables in the Model SOP when

determining appropriate academic accommodations using the following Likert scale: (1) extremely useful, (2) very useful, (3) somewhat useful, (4) a little useful, and (5) not useful. The DVs test scores, rational for accommodations, and history or use of accommodations are found Model SOP's, Part 3 Summary of Performance. The report writer's recommendations are stated in Part 4 Recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals. Lastly, the fifth DV, student input is in Part Five of the Model SOP, labeled Student Input. There are five open-ended questions that gave participants an opportunity to comment on the usefulness of different parts of the SOP.

Research Design

The quasi-experimental design included four independent variables (IVs). First, participants were asked to report their highest degree completed: (a) doctorate, (b) masters, (c) bachelors, (d) associates, (e) other. Second, participants were asked to report their discipline or field of study: (a) counseling/psychology, (b) education, (c) related disability services, (d) arts and sciences, (e) vocational/adult, (e) other. Third, participants were asked to report where they had received most of their training on the interpretation of disability documentation: (a) academic program, (b) conferences, workshops, symposia, (c) place of employment, (d) no training. Finally, participants were asked to report their number of years of experience in postsecondary disability services: (a) greater than 10 years, (b) 5 to 10 years, and (c) less than five years.

Five dependent variables (DV) were selected based on a previous study in which DSPs identified factors that influenced their conclusions when making accommodation decisions for students with LDs (Gormley et al., 2005). The dependent variables are usefulness ratings of the following: (1) student's test scores, (2) the rationale for

accommodations, (3) the history and/or use of accommodations, (4) the report writer's recommendations, and (5) the student input as provided in the Model SOP. Participants were asked to report their perceived usefulness of each of these dependent variables: (1) extremely useful, (2) very useful, (3) somewhat useful, (4) a little useful, and (5) not useful.

Procedures

After IRB approval, a proposal for the study was submitted to the Chair of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) for review by the research committee, who approved the proposal. In collaboration with the AHEAD information technology staff, the survey was coded and put into an electronic format for distribution to the organization's listserv members. The AHEAD members received three recruitment emails during the month of April 2011. An Internet link was provided for members who were interested in learning more about participating in the survey. Prior to gaining access to the actual survey, the participants' initial screen explained the study, confidentiality, and associated risk required for informed consent. The participants had to answer two exclusionary items prior to gaining access to the survey. The first item asked respondents if they had read and understood the risks associated with participating in the survey; a "no" response exited the respondent from the survey. The second item asked respondents if they work directly with students with disabilities at a postsecondary institution in the United States: A "no" response exited the respondent from the survey. An affirmative answer was required for each of the exclusionary items in order for the participant to begin the survey.

Precautions were taken by the AHEAD technology staff to ensure that the researchers and other staff at AHEAD could not identify participants by name, institutional affiliation, computer (IP) address, or e-mail address. After participants submitted their survey responses, a post-submittal screen gave participants the option to enter in a random drawing for a $50 Amazon gift card. Prior to entering for the drawing, the participants were informed, that the information necessary to participate in the random drawing was "not" confidential or anonymous. Further explanation informed participants that responses to these last-screen questions were voluntary and recorded in a unique database, completely separate from survey data. Responses to the final questions cannot be linked in any way to survey responses. These separate-screen questions were clearly marked so that participants would easily recognize them as being separate from the rest of the survey.

AHEAD gave the SOP Usefulness Survey data set to the researcher engaged by AHEAD in aggregate form in a Microsoft Excel database that does not contain identifying participant information. The raw data is stored by AHEAD in a secure computer database accessible only by password. Raw data is not available to any members of the public, members of AHEAD, or members of the AHEAD Board of Directors. AHEAD is maintaining hard copies of the data in a locked file for a period of ten years, at which time it will be destroyed. Statistical analysis using SPSS 18.0 for Windows was completed on this data in order to answer the research questions.

Power analysis. An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*POWER 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) to determine the sample size required to detect a moderate effect size. In order to conduct an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with six

levels of the independent variable, the largest number of groups within any independent variable, and to detect a moderate effect size of .35 at an alpha level of .05, 168 participants were necessary.

ANOVA. To address the following five research questions, a series of one-way ANOVAs and post-hoc tests were conducted using SPSS 18.0 for Windows. All statistic assumptions regarding ANOVA were explored prior to each analysis: (a) independence, (b) normality, and (c) homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2007).

Research Variables, Questions and Hypothesis

1. How do the usefulness ratings for the test scores section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 1: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 2: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 3: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 4: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the test scores section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

2. How do the usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 5: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 6: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 7: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 8: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the rationale of accommodations section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

3. How do the usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 9: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 10: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 11: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 12: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the history of use or success of accommodation section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

4. How do the usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 13: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 14: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 15: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 16: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

5. How do the usefulness ratings for the student input section of the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services?

Hypothesis 17: DSPs whose highest degree earned is a doctorate will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose highest degree earned is not a doctorate.

Hypothesis 18: DSPs whose discipline or field of study is education will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose discipline or field of study is not education.

Hypothesis 19: DSPs who received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation in an academic program will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs whose most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation was not in an academic program.

Hypothesis 20: DSPs who have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services will have higher usefulness ratings for the student input section than DSPs who do not have greater than 10 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study focused on the perceived usefulness of SOPs by the DSPs who make the accommodation decisions. The purpose of the study was to investigate if DSPs' perceived usefulness of a well-developed SOP differs as a function of the DSPs' highest degree earned, discipline or field of study, training for the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

Participant Demographics

AHEAD, the organization for postsecondary disability service professionals, has 2,459 members in the USA. Three recruitment emails were sent out during the month of April 2011 to the organization's listserv. There were 298 members who met the inclusionary criteria and who participated in the study. The response rate for this study is 12% at minimum. There was no record kept of the AHEAD members who attempted to participate in the survey but did not meet the inclusionary criteria of working directly with students in the United States. Participants were predominately females (81.7%) compared to males (18.3%). The majority of participants were White or Caucasian (89.5%), compared to participants who indicated that they were African-American or Black (5.8%) or Other (4.8%). Participants provided demographic data about the institution where they are employed. This information is available in Table 1.

Table 1

Institutional Characteristics of Participants

Institution demographics	Frequency	Percent
Level of institution		
Research	114	38.3
Comprehensive	47	15.8
Baccalaureate	40	13.4
Two-year	77	25.8
Vocational	3	1.0
Control of the institution		
Private	98	32.9
Public	197	66.1
Enrollment at the institution		
Fewer than 500 students	1	0.3
500 – 1,999 students	41	13.8
2,000 – 4,999 students	54	18.1
5,000 – 9,999 students	42	14.1
At least 10,000 students	159	53.4
Geographical area		
Midwestern region	87	29.2
Northeastern region	79	26.5
Southern region	82	27.5
Western region	48	16.1
Other	1	0.3

Note. Vocational = technical, trade, vocational, and professional; Comparisons of total respondents varies slightly due to "no responses" to some questions.

The majority of the participants reported that the highest degree they had completed was a master's degree (76.4%). Counseling/psychology (39.2%) and education (34.8%) were the most common disciplines or fields of study. Most participants received their training in the interpretation of disability documentation at their place of employment (49.8%). Nearly half (48.3%) of the participants reported more that they have more than 10 years of employment in postsecondary disability

services. For more detailed information regarding the participants' demographic information refer to Table 2.

Table 2

Participants' Educational and Work Experience

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Highest degree completed		
Doctorate	45	15.1
Master's	223	74.8
Bachelor's	24	8.1
Discipline or field of study		
Counseling/psychology	116	38.9
Education	103	34.6
Related disability services	28	9.4
Arts and sciences	49	16.4
Disability documentation training		
Academic program	73	24.5
Conferences, workshops, symposia	72	24.2
Place of employment	144	48.3
Post-secondary disability experience		
Greater than 10 years	143	48.0
5-10 years	71	23.8
Less than 5 years	82	27.5

Note. Comparisons of total respondents vary slightly due to "no responses" to some questions.

Participant Membership within Levels of Each Independent Variable

Prior to conducting a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer a research question, the number of participants within each level of each independent variable was examined. With respect to three of the independent variables, at least one level did not contain sufficient participants to conduct the ANOVA. In these cases, the participants' responses either were excluded from the analysis, or were collapsed into another category. The independent variable, the highest degree earned, had only two

participants indicate that their highest degree earned was an associates degree and three who indicated "other". These responses were omitted from the study. For the independent variable, discipline or field of study, only four participants selected vocational/adult as the focus of their educational program. Therefore, the levels were combined with counseling/psychology as they are both helping fields, and vocation-related content is often included in many counseling and psychology programs. Participants' responses in other (n = 10) categories were examined along with any information the participant provided to the open-ended responses and were added the most appropriate level. For example, responses such as social work were included in counseling/psychology and special education responses were included in education. With respect to the level of training in interpreting disability documentation, the level of "no training" was omitted from analyses because only seven participants endorsed this category.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to determine if the perceived usefulness ratings of DSPs on "influential factors" for determining accommodations in the Model SOP differ as a function of the DSPs' discipline or field of study, highest degree earned, training on the interpretation of disability documentation, or years of experience in postsecondary disability services. Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 18.0 for Windows (2010). Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the dependent variables.

Statistical Assumptions Regarding ANOVA

ANOVA was used to answer each of the research questions. An evaluation of the data found that the assumptions of independence was met through the survey procedure and that the assumption of variance was met. With the use of the Levene's test of equality of error variance, each of the IVs met the homogeneity of variance, as all of the significant levels were greater than .05. However, the IVs in this study did not meet the assumption of normality, which can occur when the observed variables are not part of normal distribution (Creators of Statistica Data Analysis Software and Services, 2011). Earlier studies support proceeding with an ANOVA without meeting the assumption of normality. Numerous earlier studies in which participants were AHEAD members also reported an unequal distribution among these participants (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002; Gormley et al., 2005; Harbour, 2008; Madaus, 2005; Madaus et al., 2009; Shaw, Madaus, & Dukes, 2009; Whelley, 2002; Whelley et al., 2001). In cases where the sample size is large enough, it is acceptable to continue the analysis without satisfying the assumption of normality (Creators of Statistica Data Analysis Software and Services, 2011; Hunter & May, 2003; Sawilowski, 2011).

Statistical Analyses

ANOVA and necessary post hoc tests were used to answer the five research questions. Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations of the DVs by IV level and the effect size for each of the IVs.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Regarding Dependent Variables by Level of Independent Variable

Variables	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*η2*
Test scores				
Highest degree completed				.001
Doctorate degree	45	1.78	0.85	
Master's degree	220	1.79	0.91	
Bachelor's degree	23	1.91	0.95	
Total	288	1.8	0.90	
Discipline or field of study				.006
Counseling/psychology	116	1.75	0.88	
Education	99	1.77	0.84	
Related disability services	28	1.96	1.00	
Arts and sciences	49	1.86	1.00	
Total	292	1.79	0.90	
Disability documentation training				.005
Academic program	72	1.69	0.76	
Conferences, workshops, symposia	72	1.79	0.92	
Place of employment	141	1.85	0.96	
Total	285	1.80	0.90	
Post-secondary disability experience				.006
Greater than 10 years	143	1.72	0.88	
5 - 10 years	68	1.87	0.91	
Less than 5 years	81	1.85	0.91	
Total	292	1.79	0.90	
Rationale for accommodation				
Highest degree completed				.005
Doctorate degree	43	1.88	0.85	
Master's degree	221	1.75	0.81	
Bachelor's degree	24	1.67	0.87	
Total	288	1.76	0.82	
Discipline or field of study				.016
Counseling/psychology	114	1.85	0.83	
Education	101	1.73	0.81	
Related disability services	28	1.86	0.93	
Arts and sciences	49	1.57	0.68	
Total	292	1.76	0.81	
Disability documentation training				.008

Academic program	71	1.89	0.80	
Conferences, workshops, symposia	71	1.79	0.77	
Place of employment	143	1.71	0.85	
Total	285	1.77	0.82	
Post-secondary disability experience				.011
Greater than 10 years	140	1.82	0.83	
5 - 10 years	70	1.80	0.89	
Less than 5 years	82	1.62	0.70	
Total	292	1.76	0.82	
History of use or success of accommodation				
Highest degree completed				.017
Doctorate degree	45	2.13	0.79	
Master's degree	222	1.82	0.90	
Bachelor's degree	24	1.75	1.07	
Total	291	1.86	0.90	
Discipline or field of study				.010
Counseling/psychology	115	1.94	0.93	
Education	103	1.82	0.85	
Related disability services	28	1.96	1.07	
Arts and sciences	49	1.71	0.82	
Total	295	1.86	0.90	
Disability documentation training				.004
Academic program	73	1.92	0.89	
Conferences, workshops, symposia	72	1.94	0.90	
Place of employment	143	1.82	0.91	
Total	288	1.88	0.90	
Post-secondary disability experience				.012
Greater than 10 years	142	1.96	0.93	
5 - 10 years	71	1.77	0.85	
Less than 5 years	82	1.76	0.90	
Total	295	1.86	0.90	
Report writer's recommendations				
Highest degree completed				.006
Doctorate degree	45	2.20	0.97	
Master's degree	222	2.09	0.99	
Bachelor's degree	23	1.87	0.97	
Total	290	2.09	0.98	
Discipline or field of study				.000
Counseling/psychology	114	2.11	0.91	
Education	103	2.08	1.06	
Related disability services	28	2.11	0.99	

Arts and sciences	49	2.06	0.97	
Total	294	2.09	0.98	
Disability documentation training				.002
Academic program	72	2.17	0.92	
Conferences, workshops, symposia	72	2.11	0.96	
Place of employment	143	2.06	1.03	
Total	287	2.10	0.99	
Post-secondary disability experience				.031
Greater than 10 years	142	2.24	1.02	
5 - 10 years	71	1.99	0.89	
Less than 5 years	81	1.85	0.87	
Total	294	2.07	0.96	
Student input				
Highest degree completed				.004
Doctorate degree	45	1.67	0.85	
Master's degree	221	1.74	0.90	
Bachelor's degree	24	1.54	0.78	
Total	290	1.71	0.88	
Discipline or field of study				.007
Counseling/psychology	114	1.68	0.86	
Education	103	1.68	0.82	
Related disability services	28	1.71	0.85	
Arts and sciences	49	1.88	1.09	
Total	294	1.72	0.89	
Disability documentation training				.001
Academic program	72	1.65	0.84	
Conferences, workshops, symposia	71	1.75	0.84	
Place of employment	144	1.71	0.90	
Total	287	1.70	0.87	
Postsecondary disability experience				.013
Greater than 10 years	141	1.82	0.94	
5 - 10 years	71	1.61	0.87	
Less than 5 years	82	1.63	0.78	
Total	294	1.72	0.89	

Note. Scores are based on the following five point Likert scale: 1 = extremely useful, 2 = very useful, 3 = somewhat useful, 4 = a little useful, 5 = not useful.

Results Regarding Research Question 1

ANOVA was used to explore if DSPs' usefulness ratings of test scores on the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services. None of the four ANOVAs conducted were found to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Specific ANOVA results included the following: (a) highest degree completed, $F(2, 285) = .20$, $p = .82$; (b) discipline or field of study, $F(3, 288) = .533$, $p = .660$; (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, $F(2, 282) = .72$, $p = .490$; (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, $F(2, 289) = .88$, $p = .42$.

Results Regarding Research Question 2

To investigate if the DSPs' usefulness ratings on the rationale of accommodations in the Model SOP vary as a function of (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, ANOVAs were conducted. There was no statistical significance found among any of the ANOVAs for the usefulness ratings of the rationale of accommodations among the levels of any of the independent variables at the $p = <.05$ level. The ANOVA results were as follows; (a) highest degree completed, $F(2, 285) = .68$, $p = .52$; (b) discipline or field of study, $F(3, 288) = 1.53$, $p = .21$; (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, $F(2, 282) = 1.182$, $p = .31$; (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, $F(2, 289) = 1.667$, $p = .19$.

Results Regarding Research Question 3

ANOVAs were conducted to explore if DSPs' usefulness ratings of the history of use or success of accommodation on the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services. There was no statistical significance found among any of the ANOVAs for the usefulness ratings of the history of use or success of accommodations among the levels of any of the independent variables at the $p = <.05$ level. The ANOVA results were as follows; (a) highest degree completed, $F(2, 288) = 2.483$, $p = .09$; (b) discipline or field of study, $F(3, 291) = .94$, $p = .42$; (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, $F(2, 285) = .58$, $p = .56$; (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, $F(2, 292) = 1.83$, $p = .162$.

The ANOVA for the highest degree completed approached statistical significance at $p = .085$ for the DSPs' usefulness ratings of the history of use or success on the Model SOP. The p value of .085 indicates that 1.7% of the variance between the scores is accounted for by the scores of the group levels of highest degree earned. On the rating scale, one represented extremely useful and two represented very useful. DSPs with a doctorate degree ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .79$) compared to DSPs with a master's degree ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .90$) or a bachelor's degree ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.07$) were less likely to find the history of use or success useful. However, statistical significance was not met. Without statistical significance, post hoc analysis was not possible.

Results Regarding Research Question 4

To investigate if the DSPs' usefulness ratings on the report writer's recommendations in the Model SOP vary as a function of (a) highest degree completed,

(b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, ANOVAs were conducted. The ANOVA results were as follows; (a) highest degree completed, $F(2, 287) = .86$, $p = .42$; (b) discipline or field of study, $F(3, 290) = .05$, $p = .99$; (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, $F(2, 284) = .31$, $p = .73$; (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, $F(2, 291) = 4.7$, $p = .01$. Statistical significance was found for only one of the ANOVAs for the usefulness ratings of the report writer's accommodations among the levels of the independent variables at the p = <.05 level. There was a statistically significant difference between the ratings of DSPs for the different levels of the years of experience working in postsecondary education ($p = .010$) on the dependent variable report writer's recommendations. The p value of .01 indicates that the different levels of the independent variable, experience working in postsecondary disability services, accounts for 3.1 % of the variance between the scores.

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for DSPs with greater than 10 years of experience (M=2.24, SD = 1.02) was significantly different from DSPs with fewer than five years of experience (M=1.85, SD = .87). The DSPs with 5-10 years of experience did not differ significantly from either of the other groups. This finding indicates that statistically, DSPs with less than five years of experience found the report writer's recommendations more useful that DSPs with greater than 10 years of experience.

Results Regarding Research Question 5

ANOVAs were conducted to explore if DSPs' usefulness ratings of student input on the Model SOP vary as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree completed, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, and/or (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services. There was no statistical significance found among any of the ANOVAs for the usefulness ratings of student input among the levels of any of the independent variables at the $p = <.05$ level. The ANOVA results were as follows; (a) highest degree completed, $F(2, 287) = .60$, $p = .55$; (b) discipline or field of study, $F(3, 290) = .65$, $p = .59$; (c) training on the interpretation of disability documentation, $F(2, 284) = .21$, $p = .81$; (d) years of experience in postsecondary disability services, $F(2, 291) = 1.94$, $p = .15$.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

With the passage of IDEA (2004), the Summary of Performance (SOP) became a mandated document to be provided by school districts to students who are completing their high school careers. Therefore, SOPs should be available for college personnel, such as Disability Service Providers (DSPs), when making accommodation decisions for postsecondary students with learning disabilities. This study used a model SOP published in the extant literature as an example of a well developed SOP. DSPs were asked to rate the influential factors identified in an earlier study (Gormley et al., 2005), which were included in the Model SOP. Three of the influential factors are found in the third section of the Model SOP and include the following: test scores, rationale for accommodation, history or use of accommodation. These three influencing factors are not identified in this section under headings corresponding to the particular DV. This may have had an effect on the participant's ratings of these variables. Another influential factor, the report writer's recommendations is found in the fourth section of the Model SOP, and the final influential factor, student input is found in the fifth section of the Model SOP. The purpose of this study was to investigate if DSPs' perceived usefulness of the previously identified influential factors included in the Model SOP differed as a function of the DSPs' (a) highest degree earned, (b) discipline or field of study, (c) training in the interpretation of disability documentation, and (d) years of employment in postsecondary education.

In this study, DSPs found in general that the test scores provided in the model SOP were at least very useful when making accommodation decisions. This finding was

expected, given how closely DSPs work with test scores when making accommodation decisions. Furthermore, perceived usefulness of the test scores did not differ according to the terminal degree earned, discipline or field of study, training in the interpretation of disability documentation, or years of employment in postsecondary education. Of the DSP groupings, it was expected that those with more education, those who studied in the field of education, those who were trained in reading disability documentation, and those with more years of experience would rate the model SOP's test scores as being significantly more useful. Still, within each grouping, DSPs perceived the testing data as being at least very useful when making accommodation decisions. It appears that with basic training and experience in disability services, DSPs perceive themselves as being able to use the results of testing included in the Model SOP in their practice.

Another factor that may influence DSPs' accommodation decisions is the stated rationale for previously used accommodation (Gormley et al., 2005). By understanding why specific accommodations were provided in the past, the DSP can determine the circumstances under which the same accommodations may be necessary in the college setting. The study hypothesized that DSPs with more education, who studied in the field of education, who were trained in reading disability documentation, and who had more years of experience would find the rationale for previously applied accommodations more useful compared to others within each grouping. No statistical differences were found within DSP groupings by highest degree earned, discipline or field of study, training in the interpretation of disability documentation, and years of employment in postsecondary education. When viewed separately, the mean of each of the levels of the

independent variables found the rationale for accommodations in the Model SOP to be at least very useful.

DSPs also consider the historical use of accommodations and the success of those accommodations when making decisions regarding the eligibility for accommodations in college (Gormley et al., 2005; Lindstrom, 2007; Ofiesh & McAfee, 2000). Lindstrom (2007) described this step as "critical" for determining appropriate accommodations for postsecondary students with reading and written expression disorders, explaining that the effectiveness of accommodations varies among individuals with the same diagnosis. In this study, the perceived usefulness of information related to the previous use and effectiveness of accommodations did not vary by highest degree earned, discipline or field of study, training in the interpretation of disability documentation, or years of employment in postsecondary education. A group difference regarding highest degree earned did approach significance, with DSPs with more education finding this section of the SOP less useful than those with less advanced degrees. Again, the average scores for the all the different groupings were either extremely useful or very useful for the history or use of success of accommodations included in the Model SOP.

When using psychoeducational evaluations, DSPs reported the professional's recommendations as the most often used section for service delivery decisions (Ofiesh & McAfee, 2000). As DPSs typically use the report writer's recommendations, this study found that the perceived usefulness ratings for the report writer's recommendations in the Model SOP were at least very useful for all grouping levels of DSPs. An analysis of all the levels of each of the groupings of the DSPs found that, statistically, DSPs with greater than 10 years of experience perceived the report writer's recommendations to be less

useful than DSPs with less than five years of experience. A logical explanation for this finding is that DSPs with less experience are more likely to rely on the suggestions of other professionals than are those with more experience. While DSPs with more years of experience, would apparently rely more on their own perception than the report writer's recommendations as well as the history of use or success of accommodations found in the Model SOP. This finding is in contrast to the expected outcome, which assumed that DSPs with more education would find the report writer's recommendations more useful, because they would have a better understanding of the recommendations.

Student input is often included in DSPs accommodation decisions (Gormley et al., 2005; Sharby & Roush, 2009). The student input is highly recommended to be included in the Model SOP. The student either has a face-to-face interview with a professional or completes a questionnaire. The student input in the Model SOP was rated to be perceived as at least very useful by all groupings of DSPs at all levels. This study found that with respect to student input, there were no group differences among DSPs for highest degree earned, discipline or field of study, training in the interpretation of disability documentation, or years of employment in postsecondary education.

In summary, all average ratings of DSPs on the usefulness of all of the SOP parts measured (i.e., test scores, rationale for accommodation, history or use of accommodation, report writer's recommendations, student input) in the SOP Usefulness Survey were either extremely useful or very useful. This finding was consistent regardless of the DSPs' highest degree earned, discipline or field of study, training in documentation training, or years of experience in postsecondary education. Statistical significance was approached in one aspect of the study, suggesting that perhaps DSPs

with a bachelor's or master's degrees found the history of use or use of success of accommodations more useful than DSPs with doctorate degrees. The study had one statistically significant finding: DSPs with less than five years of experience found the report writer's recommendations to be more useful than DSPs with greater than 10 years of experience.

Implications for Practice

The intent of SOPs is to help students with disabilities have a smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary environments. This study focused the use of SOPs by DSPs for accommodation decisions for students with language-based LDs who are transitioning to postsecondary education. DSPs reported that that the example SOP provided in the survey would be very to extremely useful when making accommodation decisions. However, the Model SOP included in the survey is not representative of the SOPs received by DSPs. Therefore the results of this study can only be interpreted within the information included under the headings of the Model SOP. The Model SOP has more detailed comprehensive information, presented in a more organized manner, than is present in the SOPs that are typically received. The contents of SOPs are based upon students' experience in secondary education. This study supports the position that it is important for secondary professionals to produce thoughtful comprehensive SOPs for students. To accomplish this goal, training should be infused into the secondary professionals academic programs on the development of well-developed SOPs for students with all types of disabilities who are transitioning to various postsecondary environments. Similarly, as formal academic programs are developed for DSPs education on the effective use of SOPs would be beneficial. This study's findings

support the inclusion of a SOP requirement in IDEA, as DSPs find them useful. The inconsistency of SOPs received in postsecondary education suggests the need for further policy and form development by SEAs to improve quality and consistency.

Study Limitations and Future Studies

The generalizability of this study's findings about SOPs is limited, and this limitation identifies areas for future research to develop a better understanding of this transition document. The results of this study are limited to being interpreted within the context of the Model SOP, which served as a framework for the study. The DSPs in this study rated the perceived usefulness of the Model SOP, which is a well-developed SOP for a student with a language-based LD who is transitioning to postsecondary education. The Model SOP is based on the SOP Template, which was developed to be used for students with all types of disabilities transitioning to all postsecondary environments, such as education, work, or community settings. Further research is necessary to investigate the perceived usefulness of SOPs for students with different types of disabilities, such as different types of LD, hearing, speech, etc.

An exploration of the perceived usefulness of SOPs by the SOP recipients in different environments would be beneficial. Work and community environments may need secondary professionals to provide information that is different from what is provided when preparing student SOPs for educational environments. The variations among postsecondary educational environments could also affect the usefulness of information provide in a student's SOP. For example, the difference among the SOPs of students with the same disability but with different majors, or who are attending technical schools, might inform the development of quality SOPs. The recipients of SOPs in this

study were DSPs who are members of AHEAD. These professionals who participate in a national organization focused on postsecondary disability services may be more invested in postsecondary disability services and may not be a representative sample of DSPs. The generalizability of the study is limited because of differences in the background SOP recipients in other postsecondary environments. In addition the type of environments may affect the perceived usefulness of SOPs. Therefore, before any inferences about the perceived usefulness of SOPs for other recipients in different environments are made, further studies are needed.

This study was limited to the investigation of perceived usefulness as the dependent variable. An exploration of other variables, such as the overlap of information contained in SOP documents compared to the other disability documentation received in postsecondary education and other postsecondary environments, may be informative. This study did not include a measure to identify if the inclusion of a SOP document changed the outcomes of the accommodation provided for students. In the event that the outcome of the accommodation provided was different from accommodations made without access to a SOP, follow up measures would be helpful to determine if the change resulted in increased student success.

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Appendix A

SOP Template

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE (SOP)

Instructions

Purpose: The Summary of Performance (SOP) is required under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The language as stated in IDEA 2004 regarding the SOP is as follows:
For a child whose eligibility under special education terminates due to graduation with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age of eligibility, the local education agency "shall provide the child with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals" §Sec. 300.305(e)(3).

The Summary of Performance, with the accompanying documentation, is important to assist the student in the transition from high school to higher education, training and/or employment. This information is necessary under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act to help establish a student's eligibility for reasonable accommodations and supports in *postsecondary* settings. It is also useful for the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive Assessment process. The information about students' current level of functioning is intended to help postsecondary institutions consider accommodations for access. *These recommendations should **not** imply that any individual who qualified for special education in high school will automatically qualify for services in the postsecondary education or the employment setting. Postsecondary settings will continue to make eligibility decisions on a case-by-case basis.*

The SOP is most useful when linked with the IEP process and the student has the opportunity to actively participate in the development of this document.

The SOP **must** be completed during the final year of a student's high school education. The timing of completion of the SOP may vary depending on the student's postsecondary goals. If a student is transitioning to higher education, the SOP, with additional documentation, may be necessary as the student applies to a college or university. Likewise, this information may be necessary as a student applies for services from state agencies such as vocational rehabilitation. In some instances, it may be most appropriate to wait until the spring of a student's final year to provide an agency or employer the most updated information on the performance of the student.

Part 1: **Background Information –** Complete this section as specified. Please note this section also requests that you attach copies of the **most recent** formal and informal assessment reports that document the student's disability or functional limitations and provide information to assist in post-high school planning.

Part 2: **Student's Postsecondary Goals –** These goals should indicate the post-school environment(s) the student intends to transition to upon completion of high school.

Part 3: **Summary of Performance –** This section includes three critical areas: Academic, Cognitive and Functional levels of performance. Next to each specified area, please complete the student's present level of performance and the accommodations, modifications and assistive technology that were **essential** in high school to assist the student in achieving progress. Please leave blank any section that is not applicable.

An **Accommodation** is defined as a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general education curriculum or subject matter. Students with impaired spelling or handwriting skills, for example, may be accommodated by a note-taker or permission to take class notes on a laptop computer. An accommodation *does not change the content* of what is being taught or the expectation that the student meet a performance standard applied for all students. A **Modification** is defined as a change to the general education curriculum or other material being taught, which alters the standards or expectations for students with disabilities. Instruction can be modified so that the material is presented differently and/or the expectations of what the student will master are changed. Modifications are not allowed in most postsecondary education environments. **Assistive Technology** is defined as any device that helps a student with a disability function in a given environment, but does not limit the device to expensive or "high-tech" options. Assistive technology can also include simple devices such as laminated pictures for communication, removable highlighter tapes, velcro and other "low-tech" devices.

The completion of this section may require the input from a number of school personnel including the special education teacher, regular education teacher, school psychologist or related services personnel. It is recommended, however, that one individual from the IEP Team be responsible for gathering and organizing the information required on the SOP.

Part 4: **Recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals –** This section should present suggestions for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services, to enhance access in a post-high school environment, including higher education, training, employment, independent living and/or community participation.

Part 5: **Student Input (Highly Recommended).** It is highly recommended that this section be completed and that the student provide information related to this Summary of Performance. The student's contribution can help (a) secondary professionals complete the summary, (b) the student to better understand the impact of his/her disability on academic and functional performance in the postsecondary setting, (c) postsecondary personnel to more clearly understand the student's strengths and the impact of the disability on this student. This section may be filled out independently by the student or completed with the student through an interview

NATIONALLY RATIFIED SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE MODEL TEMPLATE

This template was developed by the National Transition Documentation Summit © 2005 based on the initial work of Stan Shaw, Carol Kochhar-Bryant, Margo Izzo, Ken Benedict, and David Parker. It reflects the contributions and suggestions of numerous stakeholders in professional organizations, school districts and universities particularly the Connecticut Interagency Transition Task Force. It is available to be freely copied or adapted for educational purposes. The model template has been formally ratified by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT), Division on Learning Disabilities (DLD), and Council on Educational Diagnostic Services (CEDS), Learning Disability Association (LDA), the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE), and the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD).

Part 1: Background Information

Student Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____ **Year of Graduation/Exit:** _____

Address: _____
(Street) (Town, state) (Zip code)

Telephone Number:_____ **Primary Language:** _____

Current School: _____ **City:** _____

Student's primary disability (Diagnosis): _____

Student's secondary disability (Diagnosis), if applicable: _____

When was the student's disability (or disabilities) formally diagnosed? _____

If English is not the student's primary language, what services were provided for this student as an English language learner?

_____

Date of most recent IEP or most recent 504 plan: _____**Date this Summary was completed:** _____

This form was completed by: Name: _____ **Title:** _____

School: _____ **E-mail:** _____ **Telephone Number:** _____

Please check and include the most recent copy of assessment reports that you are attaching that diagnose and clearly identify the student's disability or functional limitations and/or that will assist in postsecondary planning:

- ☐ Psychological/cognitive
- ☐ Neuropsychological
- ☐ Medical/physical
- ☐ Achievement/academics
- ☐ Adaptive behavior
- ☐ Social/interpersonal skills
- ☐ Community-based assessment
- ☐ Self-determination
- ☐ Response to Intervention (RTI)
- ☐ Language proficiency assessments
- ☐ Reading assessments
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Behavioral analysis
- ☐ Classroom observations (or in other settings)
- ☐ Career/vocational or transition assessment
- ☐ Assistive technology
- ☐ Informal assessment: _____
- ☐ Informal assessment: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Part 2 – Student's Postsecondary Goal(s)

1.

2.

3.

If employment is the primary goal, the top three job interests: _____
_____
_____

Part 3 – Summary of Performance (Complete all that are relevant to the student).

ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA	**Present Level of Performance** (grade level, standard scores, strengths, needs)	**Essential accommodations, assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school, and why needed.**
Reading (Basic reading/decoding; reading comprehension; reading speed)		
Math (Calculation skills, algebraic problem solving; quantitative reasoning)		
Language (written expression, speaking, spelling)		
Learning Skills (class participation, note taking, keyboarding, organization, homework management, time management, study skills, test-taking skills)		
COGNITIVE AREAS	**Present Level of Performance** (Grade level, standard scores, strengths, needs)	**Essential accommodations, modifications and/or assistive technology utilized in high school and why needed.**
General Ability and Problem Solving (reasoning/processing)		
Attention and Executive Functioning (energy level, sustained attention, memory functions, processing speed, impulse control, activity level)		

Communication (speech/language, assisted communication)		
FUNCTIONAL AREAS	**Present Level of Performance** (strengths and needs)	**Essential accommodations/ modifications and/or assistive technology utilized in high school and why needed.**
Social Skills and Behavior (Interactions with teachers/peers, level of initiation in asking for assistance, responsiveness to services and accom-modations, degree of involvement in extra-curricular activities, confidence and persistence as a learner,)		
Independent Living Skills (Self-care, leisure skills, personal safety, transportation, banking, budgeting)		
Environmental Access/Mobility (assistive technology, mobility, transportation)		
Self-Determination /Self-Advocacy Skills (Ability to identify and articulate postsecondary goals, learning strengths and needs;		
Career-Vocational/Transition/ Employment (Career		

interests, career exploration, job training, employment experiences and supports)		
Additional important considerations that can assist in making decisions about disability determination and needed accommodations (e.g., medical problems, family concerns, sleep disturbance)		

Part 4 – Recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals

Suggestions for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services, to enhance access in the following post-high school environments (only complete those relevant to the student's postsecondary goals).

Higher Education or Career-Technical Education:	
Employment:	
Independent living:	
Community participation:	

Part 5 – Student Input (Highly Recommended)

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE: STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

A. How does your disability affect your schoolwork and school activities (such as grades, relationships, assignments, projects, communication, time on tests, mobility, extra-curricular activities)?

B. In the past, what supports have been tried by teachers or by you to help you succeed in school (aids, adaptive equipment, physical accommodations, other services)?

C. Which of these accommodations and supports has worked best for you?

D. Which of these accommodations and supports have not worked?

E. What strengths and needs should professionals know about you as you enter the postsecondary education or work environment?

I have reviewed and agree with the content of this Summary of Performance.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

SOP Usefulness Survey

SOP Usefulness Survey

Section 1: Demographics

1. Gender:
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Otherwise identified

2. Race and/or Ethnicity: (Categories reflective of the most recent US Federal Census)
   - ☐ White or Caucasian
   - ☐ African-American or Black
   - ☐ Other

3. What is the highest (most advanced) degree you have completed at this time? Do not include degrees that are in progress.
   - ☐ Doctorate degree
   - ☐ Master's degree
   - ☐ Bachelor's degree
   - ☐ Associates
   - ☐ Other: (Please specify degree) _____

4. Which of the following best represents the discipline or field of study in which you received your highest (most advanced) degree?
   - ☐ Counseling/Psychology
   - ☐ Education
   - ☐ Related Disability Services
   - ☐ Arts and Sciences
   - ☐ Vocational/Adult
   - ☐ Other

5. Which of the following best represents where you received the most extensive training in interpreting disability documentation?

- ☐ Academic Program
- ☐ Conferences, workshops, symposia
- ☐ Place of Employment
- ☐ No Training

6. How many years of experience do you have in the field of postsecondary disability services?
   - ☐ Greater than 10 years
   - ☐ 5 to 10 years
   - ☐ Less than 5 years

7. Please choose the category which best describes the level of the institution where you are employed:
   - ☐ Research university offering doctoral degrees
   - ☐ Comprehensive university not offering doctorate degrees
   - ☐ Baccalaureate colleges offering bachelor's degrees
   - ☐ Two-year college offering associate degrees
   - ☐ Technical/trade/vocational/professional school
   - ☐ Other: (Please specify) _____

8. Please choose the category which best describes the control of the institution where you are employed:
   - ☐ Private
   - ☐ Public

9. Please choose the category which best describes the enrollment at the institution where you are employed:
   - ☐ Fewer than 500 students
   - ☐ 500 – 1,999 students
   - ☐ 2,000 – 4,999 students
   - ☐ 5,000 – 9,999 students
   - ☐ At least 10,000 students

10. Please choose the category which best describes the geographical area in which the institution where you are employed is located?
    - ☐ Midwestern region of USA (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)
    - ☐ Northeastern region of USA (CT, DE, DC, MA, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA)

☐ Southern region of USA (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV)
☐ Western Region, Alaska, and Hawaii of USA (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)
☐ Other _____

Section 2: Summary of Performance (SOP)

In this section of the survey, you are provided with an example of a well-developed SOP for a student with a learning disability. The SOP consists of the following: Part 1: Background Information, Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goal(s), Part 3: Summary of Performance (includes academic content area, cognitive areas, and functional areas, Part 4: Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals, Part 5: Student Input. Following each part you will be asked to rate the usefulness of the part when determining the functional impact of the student's learning disability and/or when determining appropriate academic accommodations.

SOP Part 1: Background Information

Student Name: James Delgado Date of Birth: 7/6/88 Year of Graduation/Exit: 2006
Address: 123 Main Street, Anytown, FL 33323 Telephone Number: 555-123-4567 Current School: Anytown High School
Student's primary disability (Diagnosis): Learning Disability (language-based)
Student's secondary disability (Diagnosis), if applicable: N/A
When was the student's disability (or disabilities) formally diagnosed? Fourth Grade/October 1997
If English is not the student's primary language, what services were provided for this student as an English language learner? N/A
Date of most recent IEP or most recent 504 plan: 5/1/2005 Date this Summary was completed: 4/19/2006
This form was completed by: Name: Jane Resource Title: Resource Teacher/Case Manager Email: jresource@anytownhigh.edu
School: Anytown High School Telephone Number: 555-123-4567
Please check and include the most recent copy of assessment reports that you are attaching that diagnose and clearly identify the student's disability or functional limitations and/or that will assist in postsecondary planning:

☒ Psychological/cognitive neuropsychological	☒ Response to Intervention (RTI)
☐ Medical/physical	☐ Communication
☒ Achievement/academics	☐ Behavioral analysis
☐ Adaptive behavior	☒ Classroom observations (or in other settings)

☒ Social/interpersonal skills
☒ Community-based assessment
☒ Self-determination
☒ Informed assessment: Interest Inventory
☒ Informal assessment: Reading Style Preference Checklist
☒ Other: Parent/Student Interviews
☒ Career/vocational or transition assessment
☐ Assistive technology

11. Rate the usefulness of the contents of *Part 1: Background Information* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
☐ extremely useful
☐ very useful
☐ somewhat useful
☐ a little useful
☐ not useful

12. Comments on the usefulness of Part 1: Background Information

SOP Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goal(s)

1. Attend 4-year college away from home
2. Live in residence hall at college/university
3. Work part-time in photography/graphic design in summers during postsecondary studies

13. Rate the usefulness of the contents of *Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goal(s)* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
☐ extremely useful
☐ very useful
☐ somewhat useful
☐ a little useful
☐ not useful

14. Comments on the usefulness of Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goal(s)

SOP Part 3: Summary of Performance: ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA, COGNITIVE AREAS, FUNCTIONAL AREAS
(Complete all that are relevant to the student)

ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA	Present Level of Performance (grade level, standard scores, strengths, needs)	Essential accommodations, assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school, and why needed
Reading (Basic reading/decoding; reading comprehension; reading speed)	WJ-III-ACH / SS / Percentile Word Attack 88 20 Letter-Word ID 87 19 Passage Comp. 84 15 Reading Fluency 82 12 Scores on the WJ-III and performance on school assignments/exams demonstrate problems with decoding. Reading comprehension is troublesome, likely because phonological difficulties require much attention, leaving only a small amount of attention available for comprehension on the reading. Statewide Assessment: FCAT Reading Score: 354 out of 500 (with extended time) Reading Style Preference Checklist: Student Report:	Accommodations: Extended time (time and one half) on exams in courses that require extensive processing of written language (e.g. Language Arts and other writing-intensive courses) Modifications: None AT: Audio books (disk or text to speech) Compensatory strategies: Repeating to self any directions that are written, asking for directions to be orally provided, using SQ3R reading strategy (examining pictures, tables, and figures provided in textbooks)

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learns best through audio textbooks and following in the text
- Learns best by discussing reading
- Feels he needs extra time to complete reading assignments
IEP data
Reading goal: Meet goal in '03-'04 academic year for use of SQ3R reading strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (Calculation skills, algebraic problem solving, quantitative reasoning)</td>
<td>
<table>
<tr><th>WJ-III-ACH</th><th>SS</th><th>Percentile</th></tr>
<tr><td>Calculation</td><td>94</td><td>33</td></tr>
<tr><td>Applied Problems</td><td>104</td><td>61</td></tr>
<tr><td>Math Fluency</td><td>100</td><td>50</td></tr>
</table>
WJ-III scores and school performance do not indicate any major issues with mathematical ability. A closer look at WJ-III items and schoolwork (e.g., course grades) suggest geometry and algebra are more challenging for James. Based upon school performance, quantitative reasoning skills are typically above average—James is able to use math in his photography and graphic design work.

Statewide assessment: FCAT Math Score: 374 out of 500 (extended time NOT provided)

Course Grade: B average in Algebra II in '05-'06 academic year</td>
<td>Accommodations: None
Modifications: None
AT: Calculator (utilized by all students in class)
Compensatory Strategies: None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Language (written expression, spelling)</td>
<td>
<table>
<tr><th>WJ-III-ACH</th><th>SS</th><th>Percentile</th></tr>
<tr><td>Spelling</td><td>80</td><td>9</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>Accommodations: Extended time (time and one half) for</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Writing Fluency 84 15 Writing Samples 82 12 Editing 84 15 James is challenged by writing and spelling tasks. His WJ-III scores provide evidence of his written language difficulties, as does his performance on school tasks (e.g., essays, curriculum-based writing samples) that require writing and spelling. TOWL-3 Performance on the TOWL-3 showed many misspellings, poor penmanship, and inconsistent use of upper- and lowercase letters. Statewide assessment: FCAT Writing Score: 3 out of possible 6 (with time and one half) IEP data: Writing goal: Meet goal in '03-'04 academic year for use of expressive writing strategy—Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) Class Assignments (teacher created): FCAT practice writing prompts student averaged 3.7 out of possible 6 Homework: 94% average on homework in Language Arts during '05-'06 academic year (parents report checking most homework)	exams that require extensive reading/writing Modifications: None AT: Computer (laptop) for word processing purposes (e.g., on a written class exam), Inspiration software for organizing writing ideas, spell check, word prediction software for out-of-class writing assignments Compensatory strategies: Outline any lengthy writing tasks
Learning Skills (class participation, note taking,	General Ed Teacher Planning Notes: James is typically an active class participant unless a lot of reading or writing is	Accommodations: Extended time for exams (processing

keyboarding, organization, homework management, time management, study skills, test-taking skills)	required (e.g., language arts, science, history). ESE Teacher anecdotal data/ESE teacher classroom observation data: He is able to us a computer to take notes (with word prediction software) but prefers recording lectures and getting notes from classmates. James sometimes uses a software application for organizing his ideas for a writing assignment. He is challenged by reading and writing exams. Parent interview (completed parent questionnaire)/Student interview: James has used a typing text to learn how to type (29 wpm with 3 or fewer errors). His parents often assist him with organization tasks (e.g., preparing an outline for a writing assignment) and managing his daily schedule. IEP data: Student met annual goals in '04-'05 academic year for the use of Kansas study and test-taking strategies (e.g., the FIRST-Letter Mnemonic Strategy, the Paired Associates Strategy) Grade report: With time and one-half on in-class essay tests, he typically earns an average grade of B in his classes.	speed), note taker or recording of teacher lectures (handwriting and spelling difficulties require excessive attention and reduce focus on lecture) Modifications: None AT: PDA, word prediction software (NOTE: These are suggestions intended solely for the student) Compensatory strategies: Break large tasks into smaller steps, plan daily activities each morning

COGNITIVE AREA	Present Level of Performance (grade level, standard scores, strengths, needs)	Essential accommodations, assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school, and why needed
General Ability and Problem Solving (reasoning or	WISC-IV:	Accommodations: See "Reading,"

processing)	VCI: 86 PRI: 100 WMI: 110 PSI: 87 Coding and symbol search scores are in indication of deficit processing speed. College Entrance Exam — Score Verbal — 420 Math — 580 Writing — 3 (developing mastery) (Taken with 50% extended time in 11th grade)	Written Language," "Learning Skills" section Modifications: None AT: See "Written Language" section Compensatory Strategies: None
Attention and Executive Functioning (energy level, sustained attention, memory functions, processing speed, impulse control, activity level)	Classroom observation/Formal testing observation: James does not appear to have trouble with sustaining attention or maintaining appropriate attention levels throughout a 50-minute high school class period. He does struggle with reading and spelling but is able to concentrate on tasks when instructed to do so. It should be noted that these are subjective statements based upon informal observation and are not supported by objective data, as none is available. WJ-III Cognitive: See comments in "general ability and problem solving" section regarding processing speed.	Accommodations: See "Reading," "Written Language," "Learning Skills" section Modifications: none AT: See "Written Language" section Compensatory Strategies: Taking larger tasks and breaking them into smaller steps, taking/rewriting class notes using a lot of white space
Communication (speech/language, assisted communication)	N/A—Student functions within normal limits	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None

FUNCTIONAL AREA	Present Level of Performance	Essential accommodations,

	(grade level, standard scores, strengths, needs)	assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school, and why needed
Social Skills and Behaviors	Teacher observation: James demonstrates age-appropriate skills with regard to his interactions in school settings. He is sometimes frustrated with his performance in classes that require a lot of reading (e.g., science, history) and will sometimes not complete tasks in these courses. IEP data/Transition Planning Inventory assessment: He is willing to ask for assistance and understands his need for necessary accommodations and modifications. Social skills inventory: He is actively involved in the photography and yearbook clubs.	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None
Independent Living Skills	Parent conference/Transition Planning Inventory assessment: He is performing at age-appropriate levels in self-care, leisure skills, personal safety, and transportation. However, James may need to learn age-appropriate banking and budgeting skills.	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None
Environmental Access/Mobility	Parent conference/Transition Planning Inventory assessment: James has average to above-average skills in this functional area.	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None James has 20/100 vision and based upon doctor requirements must wear glasses or contact lenses while using a motor vehicle

		(including drivers education in high school)
Self-Determination/Self Advocacy Skills	Parent interview/IEP data—ChoiceMaker Self-Determination assessment: Student has successfully mastered the goals/objectives within its 3 sections: choosing goals, expressing goals, and taking action. Please see attached curriculum matrix for specific skills mastered. Examples of James's self-determination and self-advocacy skills include: scripting and leading his IEP meetings, assisting in weekly data collection and evaluation related to his IEP goals, and requesting support for learning from his teachers and parents as needed. Additionally, James has identified his postsecondary goals of living in a dorm at a university away from home. James should continue to practice these developing self-determination and self-advocacy skills given their significant importance in a college setting.	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None Compensatory Strategies: He has had extensive high school training in self-determination and self-advocacy
Career-Vocational/Transition/Employment	Transition Planning Inventory assessment/Interest Inventory data: James has expressed interest in both photography and graphic design. He has taken community-based courses to learn computer applications typically used in photography/graphic design settings. IEP data: During the past year he has shadowed persons in both professions and has worked in the field of photography. Community-based assessment: Teacher and employer evaluations are attached that demonstrate potential in the profession.	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None Compensatory Strategies: James has reported using a computer to complete written work. He should consider use of AT that reads the information to him for lengthy reading

Additional Important Considerations	James wears glasses to correct his vision, which is 20/100 without glasses.	He wears glasses or contacts to correct his eyesight

15. To the extent present, rate usefulness of the TEST SCORES included in the Present Level of Performance (middle column) in the Academic Content Area and Cognitive Area of *Part 3: Summary of Performance* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
    - ☐ extremely useful
    - ☐ very useful
    - ☐ somewhat useful
    - ☐ a little useful
    - ☐ not useful

16. To the extent present, rate usefulness of the RATIONALE (why needed) of the essential accommodations, assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school (last column) in the Academic Content Area, Cognitive Area and Functional Area of *Part 3: Summary of Performance* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
    - ☐ extremely useful
    - ☐ very useful
    - ☐ somewhat useful
    - ☐ a little useful
    - ☐ not useful

17. To the extent present, rate usefulness of the HISTORY OF USE OR SUCCESS of the essential accommodations, assistive technology, or modifications utilized in high school (last column) in the Academic Content Area, Cognitive Area, and Functional Area of *Part 3: Summary of Performance* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
    - ☐ extremely useful
    - ☐ very useful
    - ☐ somewhat useful
    - ☐ a little useful
    - ☐ not useful

18. Comments on the usefulness of Part 3: Summary of Performance: ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA, COGNITIVE AREA, FUNCTIONAL AREAS

SOP Part 4: Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals

What are the essential accommodations, modifications, assistive technology or general areas of need that the student will require to enhance access in the following post-high school environment (only complete those relevant to the student's postsecondary goals).

Higher Education or Career-Technical Education:	Accommodations/AT: James should explore the use of a note taker or tape-recording of lecture courses. Time plus one-half should be provided for exams in courses that require extensive reading and/or writing. James should also continue to access his academic texts on CD. Areas of need/Compensatory strategies recommended: Based upon his current needs, James should bring a laptop to college to use in his classes. He should use some sort of calendar that is regularly accessible (e.g., PDA or computer program if he regularly carries his laptop). This program should also have a feature that notifies him through e-mail when important appointments or due dates are upcoming. When possible, he should complete tests using a word processer rather than writing by hand. James would also benefit from meeting with his instructors to talk about assignments both before and after completing them. He should use a learning lab or learning specialist to address ongoing concerns such as goal setting, organization, and time management. If course lectures are recorded (e.g., podcast) then James should consider downloading these for later use.
Employment:	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None Areas of need/Compensatory strategies recommended: James is very interested in graphic design and photography and has experience with both. During the summer part-time work, James should use a computer to complete any written work. Additionally, he should use a PDA and other back-up methods for reminding himself of what dates and times he works.

Independent Living:	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None Areas of need/Compensatory strategies recommended: James will be living in a residence hall, and informal assessment reports suggest that he would benefit from training regarding finances and meeting appointments and deadlines. He should use a computer program for budgeting and banking, a calendar (e.g., PDA) for appointments and assignments, and break longer assignments into smaller parts within the calendar. James should post a morning routine (e.g., check calendar, confirm daily schedule on PDA, and pick necessary daily school/work items) in his room so that he does not overlook important daily tasks.
Community Participation:	Accommodations/Modifications/AT: None Areas of need/Compensatory strategies recommended: None

19. To the extent present, rate the usefulness of the REPORT WRITER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *Part 4: Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.
    - ☐ extremely useful
    - ☐ very useful
    - ☐ somewhat useful
    - ☐ a little useful
    - ☐ not useful

20. Comments on the usefulness of Part 4: Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals

SOP Part 5: Student Input (Highly Recommended)

Summary of Performance: Student Perspective A. How does your disability affect your schoolwork and school activities (such as grades, relationships, assignments, projects,

communication, time on tests, mobility, extracurricular activities)?

I have great parents and a great case manager at school. They have helped me make the most of my abilities. I have a hard time with staying organized and getting my work done on time, but my mom and dad especially help me with due dates. I use the extra time accommodation to take tests at school, and I use my computer a lot. I have a lot of friends and enjoy my photography club and photography work. I use my mom's car to go out and have been on a few dates. I can't wait to study design and photography at a college. I think my grades should be good enough to get in.

B. In the past, what supports have been tried by teachers or by you to help you succeed in school (aids, adaptive equipment, physical accommodations, other services)?

Teachers have tried a lot of ways to help me with my schoolwork. Only a few of the supports have been good at helping me with my grades. During the ninth grade I started bringing a laptop to my classes. I use it to take notes and do my in-class assignments. I connect it to a printer in class to turn in assignments. I also have been using extra time to take tests since I was in middle school. Sometimes I take tests in a room alone, but I do not do it very often. I have also been using books on disk for a long time. This has helped me a lot. I have trouble keeping up with the reading homework if I don't use the book on disk. Sometimes I have tape-recorded my teacher talking in class and sometimes I have gotten the class notes from a friend in the class. I also use a PDA to keep a schedule, and I use my digital watch to ring when it is time for class. Oh, and sometimes I have taken tests that are read to me, not in the resource room where I work on reading and writing but in, like, science and history.

C. Which of these accommodations and supports has worked best for you?

Well, I kind of ignore my digital watch. I know I should pay more attention to it. I also forget about my PDA a lot. I know I will have to use it when I live on my own. I'm lucky my mom and dad help me with my homework. I really use the books on tape, and extra time for tests is really important. Having test read to me helps some, but if I have extra time I don't really need it. Using my computer in class helps a lot, and having someone help me with taking notes is a big help too. I enjoy carrying my computer to classes.

D. Which of these accommodations and supports have not worked?

I guess I don't really need to take tests in another room. Also, reading tests to me isn't something I think I really need. I don't think I really need to tape my teacher, but if I can't get help with note taking, then I would want to tape the teacher. A

few times when I was younger my teacher would shorten my tests or say I could change some assignments, but my mom and dad told the teacher she didn't need to do that for me.

E. What strengths and needs should professionals know about you as you enter the postsecondary education or work environment?

I know what my disability is, and I can explain to my teachers why I need accommodations. I bring each of them a note every year and tell them that the note explains the accommodations I need, and I also tell them what my disability is. I learned about this by working with my resource teacher with advocacy lessons. I did really well the time I worked as a photography assistant. The work was awesome, and I was excited to do something that I loved. The photographer even wrote a note to my parents about what a great job I did. I work hard at school. I take whatever time I need to understand my assignments. I use strategies for writing, and I use my laptop to try to finish work on time because I don't handwrite very quickly. I am motivated to go to college, and I think I know how hard it will be. I do well with photography and design and math work. With accommodations, I do ok with classes that have a lot of reading and writing, mostly B's and some C's. I had a really hard time trying to learn Spanish, which is a language my dad knows. I have a lot of friends. I already know how to do a lot of things on my own, so I should be able to live in a dorm.

I have reviewed and agree with the content of this Summary of Performance.

Student Signature: James Delgado Date: 5/2/06

21. To the extent present, rate the usefulness of the STUDENT INPUT of *Part 5: Student Input* when determining appropriate ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS.

- ☐ extremely useful
- ☐ very useful
- ☐ somewhat useful
- ☐ a little useful
- ☐ not useful

22. Comments on Part 5: Student Input (Highly Recommended)